

Letter from Taizé

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A FEW DAYS after the Passover, one morning at dawn, the disciples saw the risen Jesus by the side of the lake. Not one of them asks him, "Who are you?" (Jn 1.12). But how often we would like to ask just that: "Who are you, Risen Lord?"

With regard to the resurrection, there are two responses within us. They can already be found in the Gospel and among the first Christians. The first: "I believe, Lord, I believe that you are risen." But at the same time we add the second: "Come help my little faith". These two realities are comparable to two waves which follow on from one another, rising up and falling away. Our human condition places us in a vast ocean where we are lifted up by waves which come close together or further apart.

No one could understand who the risen One is without the Gospel. The answers of the Gospel are enough to keep our heads above water: despite our little faith, we know where to rest our hearts, we know that the essential thing is to seek a relationship

RISEN LORD, you know that our being longs to contemplate God, so as to accomplish your will wherever we live, in the midst of others.

Because of the Gospel, we tell you: "I know that my Redeemer lives," but also, "Come and help the little faith I have." And already you have replied, "Blessed are those who believe and trust without needing to see."

Each time a distance grows up between us and you, you offer us interior silence, so as to remain in you and not to leave.

You promise us, O Christ, that as we remain with you, something within us is made new — a joy, simplicity, mercy, all drawn from the Beatitudes.

with the Risen Lord. And that relationship makes us people who are fully alive.

At times, even though we know where to rest our hearts: it is as if we cannot. There is a prayer which welled up in the consciousness of the early Christians. And we can say this surprising prayer in our turn: "Lord Jesus Christ, do not look on my sins, my little faith, but upon the faith of your Church, the faith of all believers since the time of Mary and the apostles up to the present day."

Some years after the death of Jesus, a Christian wrote about a captivating experience: "If anyone lives in relationship with Christ, then in them everything is made new" (2 Cor.5.17).

When it looks as though a wave will carry us away from Christ, when a distance between us and him grows up, the important thing is to turn towards him in the present moment, without putting it off till later, not even for a few minutes. He has promised that when we stay close to him something in us will be made new.

An "Operation Hope" for Haiti

Building a dwelling for every family

There is urgent need to support an effort to build small family dwellings in Haiti. Using locally available materials, including palm-leaf fibre, it's possible to construct small houses with two rooms, and so to start providing every family with a home. Building such a house costs \$500. Several thousand houses are needed.

Gifts can be sent to:

U.K.: "Operation Hope", Account no.44495090, Coutts & Co.(Duncannon Branch), 440 Strand, London WC2R 0QS.

U.S.A.: "Operation Hope", c/o Taizé, 413 W. 48th Street, New York, N.Y. 10036

IRELAND, CANADA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND: send to the addresses for Letter from Taizé subscriptions, being sure to indicate "for Operation Hope".

Later on, a second Operation Hope will also be put in motion in the Philippines.

The worldwide meetings of 1987

In little over a year, there will be three worldwide meetings at Taizé, each ten days long (which can be followed or preceded, as one wishes, by five days for personal reflection):

Friday, July 17 to Monday July 27, 1987

Saturday, August 1 to Tuesday, August 11, 1987

Friday, August 21 to Monday, August 31, 1987

Many young people are asking, "With so many threats hanging over the future, is there still any use in committing oneself to anything?" We would like these meetings to open up new ways to approach the future, but ways which are both realistic and accessible. We have already made contact with older people whose knowledge and skills will be indispensable: with the UN (in particular the High Commission for Refugees) and also with researchers in nuclear science.

To hold gatherings with young people from different continents will not happen of itself. Let us all start thinking what can be done to raise funds for the travel expenses involved.

Nothing can be created without preparation and a year is certainly not too long a preparation for next summer's worldwide meetings.

Those who come to Taizé this year will find more emphasis than ever on the time being an opportunity to try to reach the well-springs of our faith and to discover, beyond ourselves, reference points that help us forward. The meetings will also cover reflection on the "grass-roots Christian communities" of which the "Letter from Madras" speaks: their experiences will be solid supports for the worldwide meetings. □

A Children's Meeting

Children are welcome at Taizé, with their parents, from June to early September, as every summer. But this year there will also be one particular opportunity: a children's meeting led by children.

The meeting will be from Thursday 10th to Sunday 13th July, and is open to children up to the age of 14. Parents (or group leaders) can come with them: meetings will also be arranged for them. □

For young adults from 17 to 30 years old, Week-long meetings all year round. Each week the meetings begin on Sunday afternoon and last through to the following Sunday at midday (leave after the morning Eucharist). It is also possible, if necessary, to come just for a weekend (from Thursday evening or Friday midday to Sunday midday).

The meetings include, bible introductions given by a brother, sharing in small groups, time to reflect in silence. And to each small group a task is entrusted: e.g. serving meals, washing-up, etc. Those who wish may opt for

From the many letters about the Madras meeting received from those who participated, here are four which echo the experiences of many others. Firstly, from a young Filipino who wrote immediately after the elections in her country:

THE PHILIPPINES

"I was in Madras. I now realise that taking part in the meeting was a big preparation for facing the situation in my country today. Now is the moment for me and for many others to really be bearers of trust!

Before the elections took place, the bishops wrote a pastoral letter urging us strongly to be united in defence of the life of our country, and to stand up for the truth. The response which this evoked quickly became clear. Thousands of volunteers from all walks of life dedicated time and energy to try to ensure that the elections would be honest, and that at the risk of their social position and even their lives. It was impressive. As well as that involvement, we gathered for prayer vigils and meetings to deepen our commitment.

The challenge to live out our faith and to recognize it as the driving force of all our action for justice has become clearer than ever. After the elections, persecutions against the Church have continued... But for us, with all the people of the Philippines who have such a deep faith, that is something which purifies.

WHAT IS MY ROLE?

From Bordeaux: "For me a contact with poverty, although shocking, has taught me over the last two years to accept myself with less guilt. And now, rather than settling

down straightaway into an easy life I think it's essential for me to try to totally accept my situation (nationality, education, etc.) before making any choices."

From Rome: "In Madras there was the common prayer, the meetings and the small groups. And there was all that I was discovering in others' and my own heart after so much fear and inner panic. All that helped my hope and generosity to emerge: no longer fear but joy; no longer the fear of committing my own life to the search for greater sharing, in the face of bitterness and misunderstanding, but the joy of committing myself to this way and making it known."

At the end of the meeting an Indian from the Tamil Nadu region said: "I came with young people from several villages. Everything was new for them and perhaps difficult to understand all in one go, but I feel that a spark has been lit. For the first time they had the chance to express themselves, and the 'Letter to a small community' will help them keep the flame alight and to discover their place in the Church."

RISKING OURSELVES

How do these accounts fit in with our own search for communion? Most of those who came to Madras for the pilgrimage had to "risk" themselves, and this is as true for the Indians as for the Europeans or those from other parts of Asia. India is vast and coming from the North-East or the West means changing languages, food and customs. The people of the Far East live in another very different social and economic situation, with different ways of communication and expres-

a group that involves rather more manual work. It is also possible to choose to spend the week in silence: to see one's life in the light of the Gospel, with a daily bible meditation. For many young people, staying for a second week (perhaps in silence) to deepen their search proves to be a worthwhile experience. Those who wish to do this should speak with a brother during the course of their first week. Those who want to consider an even longer stay must write beforehand.

Young people 15 or 16 years old can come for these meetings: Weekends: June 13-15, Sept. 19-21, Oct. 24-26, 31 - Nov. 2 (All

MEETINGS AT TAIZÉ

Saints), 2-5, 6-9. Weeks: May 25-June 1, July 6-13, 13-20, August 25-31, Sept. 1-7.

Adults over 30 years are welcome for periods of one week, particularly between Easter and early November. Arrive Sunday afternoon; depart the next Sunday, from 11.15am on. (Also possible to come just for a weekend: Friday afternoon to Sunday). Because of limited space, please write in advance and wait for reply.

Parents with children: from March 23 to April 6, and from late June to early September each week, families form a group together. Arrive Sunday and leave following Sunday.

tion. If at times it is so difficult to go towards other people, it is usually not because we can't accept others being different from ourselves, but more through fear of our own personal limitations.

THE PARABLE OF THE YEAST

How can we cross through the tension between the desire to deepen a community's life, and the witness which calls for openness and transparency towards others? How can we overcome the tension that lies between our community's particular commitment and the search for involvement in a wider Church community?

As we think about the "Letter to a small community" this year, we will try to see what sort of things a small community can possess that are special to itself, and how it can serve others with these things. And, at the same time, we shall try to understand how the bonds of commun-

Accommodation: In tents or in dormitories (boys and girls separate). Bring sleeping-bag and lightweight or inflatable mattress. If possible, a tent.

Cost: Since the currencies of different countries vary in value, the amount people contribute for their stay varies. Suggested price (1986) per day for young people under thirty (GB and Scand.): 22 to 29 French Francs; (IRL): 19 to 25 Francs; (USA): 29 to 36 Francs. And for adults: From 50 francs (tent) or from 79 francs (rooms). Please pay on arrival and in Francs (Cash or Travellers' Cheques). N.B. there are no facilities at Taizé for changing money, so change money before you come.

Direct Coach Service to Taizé from Britain and Ireland: FRANK HARRIS COACHES Ltd, Manor Road, West Thurrock, GRAYS, Essex RM16 1EH. Tel: Purfleet (0708) 864911, Telex: 893322.

ion within the wider Church can be renewed. The parable of the yeast (Matthew 13,33) can introduce us into this mystery of communion: the yeast can only act if it comes into contact with the dough and spreads throughout. But it is this dispersion in a large body which renews the yeast itself.

The following text, written by a group in a town on the outskirts of Barcelona shares their approach to these questions and makes a few suggestions.

At San Feliu we welcomed 105 people from all over Europe (Yugoslavs, Germans, French people, Italians, Swiss people, Belgians, Poles and Spaniards): most of whom stayed with families. We did everything we could to live the few days in such a way that all could share and be open to receive from others.

Thinking back over the meeting and all the efforts that were made to prepare it as a parish (overcoming differences and including ideas from all the various groups) we realised how little effort we normally make to work together in the parish. We became aware of the general lack of cooperation between the two parishes of our town and also how very little their life affects the life of the town. As we read the first part of the Letter from Madras which speaks about overcoming differences, we realised that we had fallen

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Up till now, the annual European Meeting has taken place after Christmas in a city of Western Europe. Each year we ask ourselves if it would be possible to go, for once, to Eastern Europe. This year, we hope to be able to hold two European Meetings: one in a West European city (which has already been chosen) from December 28 to January 1; and another in Eastern Europe at the beginning of January. The venues will be announced together, as soon as possible. □

From the days of the early Church, there has been prayer for the healing of illness at Pentecost. Over Pentecost (this year 17-19 May), the sick are invited to come to Taizé. □

On Sunday morning 5th October, Pope John Paul will be at Taizé for a prayer. The church will be extended by a tent to accommodate all.

For those who want to come for the weeklong meeting which will include the Pope's visit, a special coach is planned from London, departure: Sat. evening 27th Sept. from London; return journey: leaving Taizé Sun. afternoon 5th Oct. Contact. Harris Coaches. □

Send this form to: Meetings, Taizé Community, 71250 CLUNY, FRANCE.

NAME : _____

FIRST NAME :

ADDRESS :

(with post code and country)

Telephone :

Occupation : Age :

Will participate in the meeting from to

Will bring my own tent : yes / no. If you are driving to Taizé, please tick: car ☐ mini-bus ☐

I have already been to Taizé : no / yes (date of last visit :)

Please send additional registration forms.

God wants us to be creators with him

Throughout the history of the faith there has often been the temptation to see God as a rival of mankind. Then God's role lay only in crushing human liberty and creativity, and choosing the love of God meant considering and making oneself an insignificant nothing. Some believers then thought that they were honouring God by despising themselves, and a great many people who loved human life and its creative energy thought that in the name of the fulfillment of mankind they had to reject this jealous God who was competing with man.

But the God who makes himself known in Christ is the first to love human life and to consider human beings worthy to be the privileged place of his presence on earth. God reveals himself through the human life of Christ.

God is holy. There is no need for him to belittle the human being in order to be great. For all eternity, he is who he is. He does not justify or defend himself, but gives himself. The Creator is not like a master who fears losing his place when the pupil surpasses his own skill. The Creator always precedes the one he has created and he wants always to have his creation with him and in his own image.

Chapter 2 of the book of Genesis expresses in vivid language how God made the human being as a partner. It observes that "when God made the earth and the heavens" the human being was lacking to cultivate the earth and to make it beautiful to earn the name of creation (Gen 2.4-5). Even before existing, humanity has the destiny of cooperation with God.

God makes everything. He alone can give life and growth. Yet in the garden he places a human being to cultivate and keep it (2.4-5). There is no other gardener apart from the human being. Without him, the earth would not bloom in all its beauty.

In the middle of the garden there is the tree of life. Placed in the centre, it indicates the meaning of creation itself: to bear a life-giving fruit. God gives life, but he wants this life which he has prepared as a gift for the world to grow in the soil of the garden worked by human beings. The work of mankind is to cultivate and tend. "Cultivating and tending", that applies from the making of the first tool thousands of years ago right up to the latest scientific research, from the first nursery rhyme to the works of modern art. This human labour receives a supreme dignity from God. It is cooperation in God's creation. The human being is not the source of life. But if he does not protect God's garden, the earth, from weeds and abuse, how can the tree in the centre, the tree of life, give its fruit? God did not want the fruit of life to ripen without mankind playing its own unique rôle.

FORGIVENESS WHICH RENEWS THE MEANING OF LIFE

We can say that this vision of mankind as the gardener of the tree of life is perhaps the fundamental meaning of human life, but that we are as if covered by a layer of sin. If the gardener is sick, how can he look after the garden of God?

Nothing can entice God to give up his original plan. In the time of darkness, exile and discouragement, one of the prophets sees a figure of a person with whom God links himself to an unprecedented extent. This "servant of God" (Is 42.1 ff; 49.1 ff; 50.4 ff; 52.13 ff), is God's closest collaborator and confidant. To this human being God entrusts what lies closest to his heart. God's justice enlightens the nations (Is 51.4), but it is his servant whom he makes "a light to the nations" (42.6) who "places justice before them" (42.3). God will teach the path of life (Is 2.3; 51.4 etc.), but it is in the human language of his servant that "the islands hope for this teaching" (42.4).

More the servant is poor and humble, more he will accomplish the work of God. "He will not shout nor cry out." The more he is discreet and lets God act, the further he goes. The servant of God is nothing, no one esteems him (53.3), but in the midst of his poverty God works through him, reaching even the ends of the earth (49.6).

The servant appears as the perfection of human life as God has intended from the beginning. God says, "I put my words into your mouth, I hid you in the shadow of my hand, to spread out the heavens and lay the earth's foundations" (51.16). God creates and renews heaven and earth, but at the heart of this creation is hidden the life of man. The human being is not just the object of God's will and goodness, but takes an active part in it being achieved.

Creation and forgiveness have a common source. Just as the Bible reserves the word "create" for God's action alone, it also has an expression for "forgiving" that is used of no one other than God. Forgiveness is God making new. Forgiveness is that incredible, unimaginable event "created now and not long ago" (48.7). Creating and forgiving are particular to God.

But the most surprising thing is that to bring about something as unique and divine as forgiveness, God calls on a human being. The life and death of his servant become the sign and the instrument of the re-established communion. God dwells in the attitude of submission and forgiveness of his servant, and, through it, grants his forgiveness (53.7-12).

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These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the underlined one is suggested. The reference in *italics* shows the source of the short reading.

SUN 1 Paul wrote: I received from the Lord what I passed on to you. Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, then, you are proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes. *Deuteronomy 8.2-3 • 1 Cor 11.23-26 • Luke 9.12-17*

Mon 2 By his own choice, God gave birth to us by the message of truth, so that we might be a kind of first-fruits of all he created. *Exodus 16.2-36 • James 1.18-21 • Matthew 11.27-30*

Tue 3 Jesus said: It is mercy that pleases me, not sacrifice. *Ex 19.3-6 • Jm 1.22-25 • Mt 12.1-14*

Wed 4 God has chosen those who were poor in the eyes of the world, to be rich in faith and to inherit the Kingdom which he promised to those who love him. *Ex 20.1-3, 12-17 • Jm 2.1-5 • Mt 12.15-21*

Thu 5 Speak and act as people who are going to be judged by a law that gives freedom. *Ex 22.20-21, 24 • Jm 2.12-16, 26 • Mt 12.22-30*

Fri 6 Sing a new song to the Lord! Praise his name! Proclaim his salvation, day by day. Tell the nations of his glory! *Ps 96 • Ex 33.12-17 • Jm 3.4-11 • Mt 12.33-42*

Sat 7 Jesus said: Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother. *Ex 33.18-23 • Mt 12.46-50*

SUN 8 Paul wrote: I want you to know that the Gospel I preached is no human message. Nor did I receive or learn it from any human being, but it came to me through a revelation of Jesus Christ. *1 Kings 17.17-24 • Galatians 1.11-19 • Lk 7.11-17*

Mon 9 The wisdom that comes from above is pure, peaceable, kindly and considerate; it is full of mercy and shows itself by doing good; nor is there any trace of partiality or hypocrisy in it. *Ex 34.29-33 • Jm 3.13-18 • Mt 13.1-9*

Tue 10 James wrote: Who are you to judge your neighbour? *Ex 40.36-38 • Jm 4.4-12 • Mt 13.10-11, 16-17*

Wed 11 Jesus said: The seed which was sown in good soil is like someone who hears the Word and understands it. That person yields a harvest. *Leviticus 19.1-2, 15-18 • Jm 5.7-9a • Mt 13.18-23*

Thu 12 Confess your sins to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed. *Lv 19.33-34 • Jm 5.10-16 • Mt 13.24-30*

Fri 13 Jesus said: The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with a large amount of dough till it was leavened all through. *Lv 26.11-13 • Acts 10.44-11.3, 15-18 • Mt 13.31-35*

Sat 14 Jesus said: The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys it. *Numbers 6.22-26 • Mt 13.44-48, 51-52*

SUN 15 Paul wrote: It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. *2 Samuel 12.7-10, 13 • Gal 2.19-21 • Lk 7.36-50*

Mon 16 Jesus came towards his disciples, walking on the water, and they were terrified. But at once he said to them: Courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.

Nb 11.24-29 • Ac 12.1-12a • Mt 14.22-33

Tue 17 Jesus said to the Canaanite woman: Woman, you have great faith. May your wish be granted.

Nb 12.1-8 • Ac 13.28-33, 38-39 • Mt 15.21-28

Wed 18 Jesus took the seven loaves and the fish, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples, and they in turn gave them to the crowd. All ate and were satisfied.

Nb 23.7-12 • Ac 13.44-49 • Mt 15.29-39

Thu 19 The Lord your God is a merciful God who will not abandon you.

Deuteronomy 4.12, 29-31 • Ac 14.8-18 • Mt 16.1-12

Fri 20 Peter said to Jesus: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."

Dt 4.33-39 • Ac 14.19-23 • Mt 16.13-20

Sat 21 Moses said to the people: The Lord our God is the one, the only God. Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.

Dt 6.4-9 • Mt 16.21-23

SUN 22 Jesus said: If anyone wants to follow me, then they must renounce themselves, take up their cross every day and follow me. *Zechariah 12.10-11 • Gal 3.26-29 • Lk 9.18-24*

Mon 23 Moses said to the people: God set his heart on you and chose you not because you were the most numerous of all peoples, but because he loved you and meant to keep the promise he made to your ancestors. This is why

he redeemed you from the land of slavery.

Dt 7.7-9 • Ac 16.9-15 • Mt 17.1-13

Tue 24 ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

I thought, "My work has been futile, I have worn myself out for nothing." Yet all the while my cause was with the Lord and my reward lay with my God.

Isaiah 49.1-6 • Lk 1.57-66, 80 • Mt 17.14-20

Wed 25 Moses said to the people: When you have all you want, and your riches abound, do let your heart become proud. Do not then forget the Lord your God who delivered you from the land of slavery, who guided you through this vast desert and who in a waterless place, brought you water out of hard rock.

Dt 8.2-3, 12-15 • Ac 16.22-34 • Mt 17.22-27

Thu 26 Jesus said: Anyone who welcomes one little child in my name welcomes me.

Dt 10.12-19 • Ac 17.22-28, 30-31 • Mt 18.1-5

Fri 27 Moses said: Be open handed towards your neighbour, and towards the poor and needy in your land.

Dt 15.7-11 • Ac 20.7-12 • Mt 18.10-14

Sat 28 The Word is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice.

Dt 30.11-14 • Mt 18.15-18

SUN 29 SS PETER AND PAUL

Paul wrote: I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord will give me.

Ac 12.1-11 • 2 Timothy 4.6-8, 17-18 • Mt 16.13-19

Mon 30 Moses said to the people: I place before you life or death. Choose life: loving the Lord your God, listening to his voice, holding fast to him; for in this your life consists.

Dt 30.19-20 • Ac 20.22-27 • Mt 18.19-22

The Acts of the Apostles

The evangelist Luke wrote two books — a Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. He is the only one of the four evangelists to tell us not only about the good news of Christ, but also how the Gospel of Jesus Christ was brought, in the space of a few years, to the ends of the earth, crossing all cultural and linguistic boundaries (Acts 1.8 with 28.28-31).

After his resurrection Christ appeared to his disciples and said to them, "Do not be afraid! You are going to be my witnesses to the ends of the earth." (Luke 24.36-49 and Acts 1.3-9). The disciples who had all abandoned Christ at the time of his arrest, put their trust in his word and allowed themselves be gripped by fresh enthusiasm. And indeed, they reached the ends of the earth.

At Pentecost, the disciples received an inner strength which led them a long way. In passing from one people to another, from one culture to another, they evidenced an incredible inner freedom. Throughout their journey, "the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (13.52).

Luke also describes the serious tensions and numerous misunderstandings which arose as a result of the apostles' ministry. Chapters 11 and 12 narrate how the Gospel was passed for the first time to the non-Jewish world. Peter, the fisherman from the Lake of Gennesaret, who had certainly not received much preparation for crossing cultural frontiers, was the first to do so and to be inwardly amazed by his experience.

It was Paul who received the call to take the Gospel from the Middle Eastern world to the very different world of Europe. At Philippi, a place in Greece settled by former soldiers, he ended up in prison. There he led the prison governor and "all his household" to the faith (ch. 16). On the Areopagus of Athens, currently the world centre of culture and philosophy, Paul also proclaimed the resurrection of Christ. There he was not taken seriously and many treated him with scorn. ▶

July

Tue 1 Paul said: Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who himself said, "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving".

Deut 31.6-8 • Acts 20.28-36 • Matthew 18.23-35

Wed 2 Jesus said to a rich young man: If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.

Dt 32.1-4 • Ac 21.10-14 • Mt 19.13-22

Thu 3 ST THOMAS

Paul wrote: You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone.

Ephesians 2.19-22 • John 20.24-29 • Mt 19.23-26

Fri 4 Jesus said to his disciples: Everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children or land for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times as much, and also inherit eternal life.

Dt 32.10-12 • Ac 22.6-16 • Mt 19.27-30

Sat 5 Isaiah said: A voice cries, "Prepare in the desert a way for the Lord. Make a straight road for our God"

Isaiah 40.1-5 • Mt 20.1-16

SUN 6 Paul said: It is out of the question that I should boast at all, except of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Is 66.10-14 • Galatians 6.14-18 • Luke 10.1-9

Mon 7 Paul said: Nobody should look for selfish advantage, but rather for the interests of others. Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Is 40.6-8 • 1 Cor 10.23-24,31-11.1 • Mt 20.17-23

Tue 8 Jesus said to his disciples: Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant.

Is 40.9-11 • 1 Cor 11.23-26 • Mt 20.24-28

Wed 9 There are many different gifts, but it is always the same Spirit; there are many different ways of serving, but it is always the same Lord. There are many different forms of activity, but in everybody it is the same God who is at work in them all.

Is 40.25-28 • 1 Cor 12.1-6 • Mt 21.1-11

Thu 10 Those who hope in the Lord will regain their strength, though they run they will not grow weary, though they walk they will never tire.

Is 40.29-31 • 1 Cor 12.7-11 • Mt 21.12-17

Fri 11 The Lord said to his people: You whom I have summoned from countries far away, I have chosen you, I have not rejected you. Do not be afraid, for I am with you.

Is 41.8-10 • 1 Cor 12.12-22 • Mt 21.28-32

Sat 12 The Lord said: The oppressed and needy search for water, and there is none. I shall answer them, I shall not abandon them. I shall open up rivers on barren heights and water-holes down in the ravines.

Is 41.17-20 • Mt 22.1-10

SUN 13 Christ is the image of the unseen God, in him were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible.

Dt 30.10-14 • Colossians 1.15-20 • Lk 10.25-37

Mon 14 Christ's body is yourselves: each of you has a part to play in the whole.

Is 42.1-4 • 1 Cor 12.26-31 • Mt 22.31-40

Tue 15 Paul wrote: Though I have the power to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge, though I have all the faith necessary to move mountains - if I am without love, I am nothing.

Is 42.5-7 • 1 Cor 13.1-7 • Mt 23.1-4,8-11

The birth of the Church was not an easy period, and in this it resembles the life of Christ himself and all the opposition it aroused. There weren't huge crowds who gave themselves over to the message of the Gospel. The apostles and all the first Christians met with slander and persecution wherever they went (ch. 20 and 21). Their journeys, and the decisions they had to make on them, draw them close to Christ and his own sufferings. They have constantly to renew their "yes" to Christ and to continue to follow him without letting themselves be stopped along the way by those who try to make them frightened in the face of danger. In chapter 21 we find an account that is particularly clear on this question: a whole community and even Paul's own companions, including Luke, the author of this book, beg the apostle not to continue on his way because death awaits him (21,10-14, especially v.13).

At the end of the book of the Acts of the Apostles we find St. Paul in Rome waiting for his trial before the emperor. Is that the accomplishment of the promise of Jesus, "You will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth"? Some say that originally the book of Acts would not have ended this way, and that the true closing chapters must have been lost, chapters which would have had a more glorious ending.

But it is this way that God transformed this witness to Christ. He can take no more initiatives himself nor go anywhere: Paul who has arrived at the centre of power of the world at that time is a prisoner there, in the image of Christ. He awaits his death which will be the supreme testimony. Trusting in Christ's promise, the author of the book of Acts has the daring to conclude his book by saying that Paul, "boldly and without hindrance, taught about the Lord Jesus Christ" to those who came to see him in the house where he was confined (28,31).

Wed 16 Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Put c into deep water and pay out your nets for catch". Simon replied, "Master, we have worked hard all night long and caught nothing but if you say so, I will pay out the nets".

Is 42.10a,16 • 1 Cor 13.8-13 • Lk 5.1-11

Thu 17 Thus says the Lord, who created you. Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name, you are mine.

Is 43.1-3a,4a • 1 Cor 15.1-11 • Lk 5.12-16

Fri 18 Paul wrote: If Christ has not been raised then your faith is futile. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. Just as in Adam all have died, so in Christ all will be brought to life.

Is 43.10-13 • 1 Cor 15.12-28 • Lk 5.17-26

Sat 19 Thus says the Lord: Look, I am doing something new, even now it is emerging, can you not see it? Yes, I am making a road in the desert and my people will sing my praises.

Is 43.18-21 • 1 Cor 15.42-45,53-58 • Lk 5.27-32

SUN 20 Jesus said to Martha: You worry about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one.

Genesis 18.1-10 • Col 1.24-28 • Lk 10.38-42

Mon 21 Paul wrote: I am confident that the one who began a good work in you will go on completing it until the day of Jesus Christ comes.

Is 44.1-3 • Philippians 1.3-6 • Lk 6.12-19

Tue 22 Jesus said: Blessed are you who are poor, the kingdom of God is yours.

Is 44.6-8 • Ph 1.7-11 • Lk 6.20-23

Wed 23 Jesus said: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly.

Is 44.21-23 • Ph 1.12-19 • Lk 6.27-35

Thu 24 Paul wrote: Life to me is Christ.

Is 45.2-4 • Ph 1.20-26 • Lk 6.36-38

Fri 25 ST JAMES

Jesus said: The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many.

2 Cor 4.7-15 • Mt 20.20-28 • Lk 6.39-45

Sat 26 Jesus said: Everyone who comes to me, listens to my words and acts on them, like a person who, when building a house, dug deep and laid the foundations on rock.

Is 45.8,15 • Lk 6.46-49

SUN 27 God has raised you up with Christ. He has forgiven us every one of our sins.

Gn 18.20-32 • Col 2.12-14 • Lk 11.1-13

Mon 28 Paul wrote: You have been granted the privilege, not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well.

Is 45.18-19 • Ph 1.27-30 • Lk 7.1-10

Tue 29 Paul wrote: Be one in love, one in heart and one in mind; do nothing out of jealousy or vanity.

Is 45.22-24a • Ph 2.1-4 • Lk 7.18-23

Wed 30 Becoming as human beings as we are, Christ Jesus was even humbler, to the point of accepting death, death on a cross. And this God raised him high, and gave him the name which is above all other names.

Is 46.1-9 • Ph 2.5-11 • Lk 7.24-28

Thu 31 It is God who, for his own generous purpose, gives you the intention and the power to act.

Is 48.3-10 • Ph 2.12-18 • Lk 7.36-43

...paths of communion

to discouragement and did not believe that we could achieve anything. Being convinced of that, we have often let opportunities slip by which could have been chances for the two parishes to work together.

In the same way, we realised that we had often spent ourselves in long discussions in which we tried more to get others to agree to our way of looking at things than really to bridge the differences between persons. All of that contributed to making the parish more a place of conflicts and separations than a home for us all.

IDEAS FOR ACTION

Speaking about all this during a meeting with families it became obvious that we need to find time for gatherings that make the activities of the different groups better known and appreciated by the rest of the parish. During Lent we are meeting each Saturday after the Eucharist to talk over the readings and to create new relationships between us. There are so many people who go into the church on Sunday alone, and who come out also all alone! These meetings will help us to be welcoming for each other and to become aware of the poverty not only of our liturgies but also our relationships.

The beginning of the Letter from Madras speaks about "finding a way". We are often tempted to take on many activities and then we are concerned to be noticed and

thanked. But what counts is not doing a lot of necessary things, but rather changing our attitude to become more open to those around us so that they can share what has been given to us. What we are is a gift, and we are deserving of it to the extent that we share it.

This attitude is difficult to hold to because nobody thanks us (explicitly, at any rate) for what cannot be seen. But we are enriched by it. Living that in humility does not mean keeping silent about our faith, but it means recognising that it does not make us superior to others. Then we can live out our faith in simplicity.

Someone has also suggested that a group from the parish goes to participate in the municipal youth council in order to give greater contact with the rest of life in the town. □

...creators with God

In human life there is nothing more welcoming and transparent to the presence of God than an attitude of forgiveness. It opens wide the gates for God. In forgiveness God and human life touch, harmonize, melt together. There the human being is in God's likeness, and creator with God.

But who is the servant? What is the human life through which God accomplishes his work? The prophet certainly expresses himself on the basis of his own experience. But he says more than he was experiencing himself. He saw that the secret of all human life, is that it is made to receive the presence of God.

This is why the "multitudes" are included in his songs. The Spirit of God which inspires the prophet is the Spirit which will rest on the Messiah, the Christ (cf. 1 Pet 1.11). And it is true that only Christ would fully live out what the prophet had seen. But in Christ, what was said about the servant becomes the hidden truth of every human. Every human heart is made to be dwelt in by the same spirit. The Christ is "the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8.29).

CHRIST, GOD WITH US

The life of Jesus consecrates our humanity to God for ever. Jesus knew the vulnerability of childhood, he grew

up and worked, he rejoiced and he experienced difficulties. There were no superhuman additions to his human life. He did not call the angels to his aid (Matt 26.53). At the moment of his death agony, Elijah did not come to support him (Matt 27.45-50). And yet, God is fully revealed by his human life. Jesus does what God alone can do, he forgives sins (Mk 2.5-7), and he asks for a faith with total submission (Jn 14.1) that only God can ask.

Since the Ascension of Christ, God is still continually acting in the world and in history through human beings. The Risen Lord says to his disciples, "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you." (Jn 20.21). Just as God did nothing without the one he had sent, he wants to do nothing without us. By breathing the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, Christ introduces them into a communion which corresponds exactly to the communion which exists between him and God, his Father.

United with God and with the force of the Spirit, Jesus forgave, and by forgiving he created things anew. Today still, by the Word, and by the community of his disciples, he continues to affirm his forgiveness. Thus, by his Spirit, we "share in God's work" (1 Cor 3.9). God enables us to invent, to make things anew.

Sometimes people's doubt in humanity is dressed up as something particularly religious. But does humble trust in God not lie rather in accepting joyfully what God gives us to be: sharers in his work and a living sign of his Christ? □

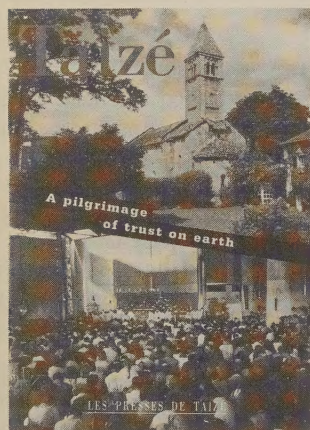
News

ITALY

A day of prayer and sharing in a parish in Rome.

Before setting off to Barcelona we had said to ourselves, "If we are undertaking this pilgrimage of trust far away, why not also suggest something at home and invite people from all over the city of Rome to our parish?"

The day began with the parish Mass, with a lot of children present. They had prepared some of the prayers. Then we reflected on the theme of creation with God in the different areas of our life. After the meal there was a biblical introduction as an introduction to making visits in the neighbourhood: "Look at Mary setting out to visit Elizabeth. She shows us that even if we can give very little, it is always possible to bring the Christ who is present in us." One group went to visit old people and the sick, another group went to visit contemplative sisters who had offered to share something of their way of life, another group went to a neighbouring parish which is very poor but rich in its community life, and finally, another group was very warmly welcomed by a protestant congregation in our neighbourhood.



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LES PRESSES DE TAIZÉ

At the end of the afternoon we met and we continued the morning's reflection. Each group prepared prayer intentions to express the essential things that had been discovered during the day. Before the long final prayer, about forty families of the parish welcomed all the participants to supper and talked together about how a family can become more of a "household church".

SWITZERLAND

"Thank you for your letter 'replying' to the drawings done by handicapped children that we sent for the meeting in Madras. It arrived a few days after the icons of the cross and of the resurrection had been here. It was the second time that they had been with us. With the accompanying notebook I was able to show the children the path they had covered. Without any prompting from me, they wanted to write something in the book as well. On one of the centre pages they wrote expressions of love for Jesus. One little girl, born with only one arm, wrote: 'O Jesus, when are we going to see you?' Then Daniel came to me during the break to say that he wanted to 're-build the cross all alone'. He did so and began to dance with it and then, becoming self-conscious all of a sudden, he came to a standstill leaning against it, looking at us. The only words that I could find to say were, 'It is not we who carry the Jesus' cross, it carries us.'"

IRELAND AND BRITAIN

The crossings between Ireland and France were rough for those travelling to Taizé for Easter — ships went through heavy storms and considerable delays. There were in all 250 who came to spend Holy Week in Taizé, 50 of whom came together from North and South to pray for peace and unity. On Easter Sunday morning, Brother Roger welcomed this group and, in a spontaneous gesture, presented them with a pair of doves in a wicker basket. These doves had been brought by young Italian farm workers from the region of Bergamo who had also come to spend Holy Week in Taizé. To know that many others, in many countries, are also praying for peace and unity is a great encouragement. With this support, it is possible to continue on the pilgrimage of trust in Ireland.

Some letters:

"I am involved now in a Pax Christi Holiday Playscheme in Ballymurphy, West Belfast. We are 12 volunteers, from the USA, Holland, Eire and Britain, aged 20-22. We are working together with the youth leaders at Newhill Play Centre to entertain the local children aged 4 upwards, with games, arts & crafts, fancy-dress and outings.

This provides a very valuable opportunity not only for work with children, but also to experience a notoriously troubled situation at first-hand, and to seek to appreciate the complexity of social, political, historical, personal, religious, and cultural factors involved.

I have thought of Taizé very often. I realize how deeply I have accepted as true the suggestion to listen to all people and to try to understand everyone, whoever, wherever, whatever their beliefs. It is normal here for a Catholic never to even meet a Protestant until a late age - say 18 years old, and I don't think this is right.

At home in London, I have befriended a young boy who is 11 years old. His father died, he

is half Spanish and half Italian. His mother is saint, a model of serenity and cheerfulness in the midst of her grief. I have felt so privileged to be accepted by the family, they are very loving and my love for children has been fostered: as well as taking Francesco to football matches and so on, too benefit from his childlike character, the unashamed curiosity, smiles and enthusiasm.

When I wanted to contact them, initially I was hesitant, since my acquaintance with them was very brief and tenuous. But I thought to myself that it was a way of putting into practice some suggestions made at Taizé such as crossing generation or culture barriers." (Matthew)

"After my last visit to Taizé, I felt determined to understand and respond to the voice of those for whom life offers few choices, both in employment prospects and in housing, amongst others. Whilst there is much around which can make us feel despondent and that there is little hope for something better, there is hope. This kind of hope does not lie in the politicians or church leaders alone, but amongst the people themselves, amongst those who welcome you into their homes for a cup of coffee, or simply to talk and share something of themselves with you. This hope draws its strength and 'power' from the most vulnerable corners of society, a quiet undercurrent that flows through people's lives.

Shortly after returning to Leeds from Taizé, I worked with a local church in setting up a small self-help project to respond to the needs and aspirations aroused by unemployment. I was unemployed last year, and together we worked in small ways to build a hope. Those with whom I was fortunate enough to work were Bengali, Vietnamese and Pakistanis mainly. We had no real funds to sustain us, but we found that even the smallest gestures were enough to carry through the day. A small success, or a friend who came to join us, and so on.

As you can see, there is more to the inner city than riots and robbery, there is the glimmer of possibilities as yet unrealized, and the presence of Christ who sustains." (Nevill)

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